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Editor's Introduction to the 4th Issue of the PTO Journal

Mark Weinberg

Center for Applied Theatre, mark@centerforappliedtheatre.org

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Pedagogy and Theatre of the Oppressed Journal

Vol. 4, Issue 1 (Fall 2019)

Editor's Introduction to the 4th Issue of the *PTO Journal*

Mark Weinbergⁱ, editor

This brief note from the new editor acknowledges the accomplishments of the previous editor and provides an introduction to this issue of the journal pointing to both continuity and change.

I am more than honored and delighted to have had the opportunity to serve as editor for the 4th issue of the ***PTO Journal***. I would be remiss if I did not begin this introduction with an acknowledgement that this issue would not have been possible had it not been for the efforts of Jenn Freitag who edited the first 3 issues. Not only did she focus the *Journal* on reflecting the core principals of PTO and establish a standard that balanced excellence and inclusivity, but she developed a set of documents and procedures that will enable the *Journal* to continue now that her tenure as editor has ended. I would also, as she did in her introduction to Issue 1, like to acknowledge Kyle Rudick for his invaluable support, advice, and generosity of time and spirit.

The mission statement of PTO reads: *Pedagogy & Theatre of the Oppressed, Inc. (PTO) supports people whose work challenges oppressive systems by promoting critical thinking and social justice through liberatory theatre and popular education. Our approaches stem from the theories and practices of Paulo Freire and Augusto Boal. We foster collaborative connections to share, develop, promote, and document liberatory theatre, popular education, and other revolutionary actions. PTO serves as a resource for oppressed peoples and their allies in diverse communities, contexts, and traditions around the world.*

The *PTO Journal* is dedicated to serving this mission by providing a venue for promoting, documenting, and critically reflecting on the theory and practice of revolutionary pedagogy and theatre. The goal is to create a scholarly and community-based space for critical dialogue about oppression and liberation, and to foster collaborative connections that share, develop, promote, and document how transformative theory (including, but not limited to, Pedagogy of the Oppressed and Theatre of the Oppressed) can affect social change locally and globally. The journal is dedicated to critically celebrating experiences of communities we belong to and interact with, and serving as a weapon in the struggle against systemic oppressions in the pursuit of liberation and justice. We welcome submissions from artists, educators, practitioners, and activists who wish to contribute to the on-going discussion and development of liberatory practice around the world.

With that in mind, this and future issues of the journal will be divided into distinct sections. We feel that by intentionally organizing the *PTO Journal* into different areas which promote various types of critical exploration and dialogue, it will become even more vibrant and active in service to its mission. The sections are:

- **Articles, Papers, Essays, and Opinions**—this section includes a wide variety of pieces that discuss, analyze, theorize about, debate the merits of, explore issues related to, develop, promote, and in other ways explore the progress, theories, and practices of Theatre of the Oppressed, Pedagogy of the Oppressed, and related liberatory theatre and education techniques. Issue 4 includes an article about the use of digital role-playing games to explore oppression in education by Arab-Israeli teachers and a look at culturally relevant teaching approaches as a step in the direction of liberatory curricular reform in Lebanon.
- **Project Reports**—this section includes more than simply documentation of workshops, performances, and other projects created by facilitators, participants, or audience members. Contributions to this section also include information about the rationale behind and the

development of projects and analysis of their outcomes, all designed to critically examine and inform *Journal* readers/viewers about the range of TO, PO, and related activities around the world. This issue contains three reports – two about the development of community-based performances (links to scripts included) and one about a community-college partnership to develop workshops for young people.

➤ **Reviews**—this section includes commentaries on, reviews of, dialogue with, and advice about published (books, articles, poetry, etc.) or exhibited (videos, films, live performances) texts. The goal is to promote dissemination of and critical dialogue about ideas expressed in texts to which we might have or can gain access. Two books have been reviewed in this section. Please feel free to suggest recent publications or performances you would like to see reviewed in future issues.

We encourage submission to any of the areas in any style or format that you feel communicates your ideas. We will support both experienced authors and those new to publishing with editorial advice, critical commentary, and whatever else is needed to help make your contribution ready for inclusion in the *Journal*.

There are many ways to support the efforts of PTO and its members to promote liberatory and revolutionary action in the service of social justice. Work on the *PTO Journal* is one of those ways. Many people volunteered a great deal of time and effort to review and edit articles and advise me on technicalities and procedures. I cannot thank them, and all the authors who submitted articles (both accepted for this issue or delayed for future consideration) enough. I hope you find the results of our efforts challenging, inspiring, and demanding. I urge you to visit the PTO web site (www.ptoweb.org) to find out more about the work of the organization and its amazing members, to join PTO as a way of supporting our mission, and to submit to future issues of *PTOJ*.

ⁱ **Mark Weinberg** (MFA, Ph.D., University of Minnesota) is co-director of The Center for Applied Theatre, which he co-founded with Jenny Wanasek in 2000. He has over 35 years of university experience teaching a wide range of traditional and applied theatre courses and communication skills, has been a member of PTO for over 20 years, and served on the Board for 9 years.

Mark began his study of Theatre of the Oppressed with Augusto Boal in 1992. He has created Forum Theatre performances and conducted workshops and training sessions for educators, administrators, students, business leaders, NGOs, and community organizations in the U.S., Canada, Australia, and Austria. He has published and lectured widely on theatre and social activism and chronicled the development of collective theatre in his book *Challenging the Hierarchy: Collective Theatre in the United States* (Greenwood Press, 1992). Some of the techniques developed by CAT are described in "The One-Line Play," a chapter of *Come Closer: Critical Perspectives on Theatre of the Oppressed* (Lang, 2012).

CAT's recent activities have included work with middle school students to develop an interactive multi-media installation around issues related to bullying and violence, creation of graphic storybooks about educational and behavioral decisions, photo dream biographies, Forum Theatre plays about issues faced by recent immigrants, and workshops on making positive choices. Other projects have included Image Theatre workshops on activism and commitment at the Hun School of Princeton and, with Jenny Wanasek, exploration of systemic oppression at the UW-Milwaukee Institute of World Affairs as part of the Global Action Through Engagement (GATE) program, Forum Theatre development and jokering of performances about issues related to alcohol consumption for university students, and professional development workshops for Milwaukee Succeeds and Arts at Large. Incidentally, he holds a sixth-degree Black Belt in Karate and was founder and lead instructor of the Black Belt Leadership Academy where he taught leadership skills through the martial arts to students aged 4 and up. Mark can be contacted directly at mark@centerforappliedtheatre.org or ptojournaleditor@gmail.com.